



FEMA

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DISASTER NEWS

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FEDERAL AND STATE DISASTER ASSISTANCE HELPS DISASTER VICTIMS HELP THEMSELVES

EAST LANSING, MI – Homeowners, renters and business owners throughout the 19 disaster-declared counties are taking an active role in their own recovery, report federal and state disaster recovery officials. “Michiganians who had damage from the severe storms on May 20-24 are doing what they need to do before requesting federal assistance. Fortunately, damage, though widespread, was minimal in many areas. Now, we want to make sure that those who qualify receive the assistance available to them,” said Marianne C. Jackson, federal coordinating officer for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

“Those who had damages as a result of the event have already done many things for themselves –such as inventorying damages and sanitizing their homes after the storms had passed– before calling for financial assistance,” said State Coordinating Officer F/Lt. Ralph J. Hobrat of the Michigan State Police Emergency Management Division (MSP/EMD). “Eligible applicants in this disaster experienced mostly seepage or flooding in their basements, had damaged appliances and basement utilities, and were uninsured.”

Disaster aid in the form of small grants for essential home repairs is available for those eligible individuals with uninsured, disaster-related damages or needs and are unable to recover on their own. “People in the 19 declared counties must call the FEMA registration number, 1-800-621-(FEMA), to begin the process of applying for assistance. The number is (TTY) 1-800-462-7585 for anyone with a speech or hearing impairment,” said Jackson.

FEMA inspectors will visit to verify damage and loss. Inspectors will test utilities and appliances to determine if repair or replacement is needed. Damaged items such as furnaces, water heaters, washers and dryers, freezers and other essentials may qualify for assistance while food and stored clothing will not.

Individual property owners can prepare for future severe weather in a number of ways. Community officials are aware of weather-related hazards in their areas and are a good source of information on how to best protect yourself, your house and property. Basement flood and seepage protection measures can vary in cost and complexity and some require permits. They may include: installation of sewer backflow valves; raising or flood proofing heating, ventilating or air conditioning equipment; anchoring fuel tanks; raising electrical system components; and raising washers and dryers.

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MSP/EMD coordinates state assistance and resources during an emergency. “In addition,” explained Hobrat. “We work to prepare the state for all types of hazards by funding statewide and local activities for homeland security, assisting local and state agencies in determining homeland strategies and priorities, and implementing weapons of mass destruction training and anti-terrorism training and exercises.”

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On March 1, 2003, FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. FEMA's continuing mission within the new department is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration.